

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 5 and 6 have been amended.

In the outstanding Office Action, independent Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0168873A1 to Ahn et al. (Ahn), and independent Claim 2 and its dependents were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Ahn in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0072198 to Ahn (Ahn '198). Without acceding to the rejections, independent Claims 1 and 2 have been amended to clarify the invention intended to be claimed.

Independent Claim 1, as amended, recites converting only a part of a surface of the silicon nitride film to a non-silicon-nitride type insulator film.

By contrast, Ahn discloses a silicon nitride liner 47 (see Ahn FIG. 11), of which an entire surface is oxidized (this is readily apparent from FIG. 12, ref. numerals 471 and 472). Particularly, during an annealing process, oxidizing an SOG layer and a surface of an underlying silicon nitride liner 47 converts a surface of the silicon nitride liner formed on an inner wall of the trench and an overlying SOG layer 51 into a silicon oxide layer 472 and a

cured SOG layer 511, respectively. Reference number 471 represents a silicon nitride liner after oxidizing (see Ahn [0050] and FIGS. 11 and 12).

Ahn does not disclose any mechanism by which to oxidize only a part of a surface of silicon nitride liner 47. Accordingly, the rejection of Claim 1 has been overcome, and Claim 1 should now be allowed.

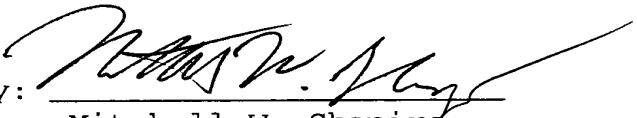
Independent Claim 2 has been amended similarly to Claim 1, and, as will be appreciated from the preceding remarks, distinguishes patentably from Ahn. Ahn '198 does supply the deficiencies of the primary reference relative to Claim 2. Accordingly, Claim 2 should now also be allowed, as should its dependents.

A Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and

has not been separately requested, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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